

LEAPING TROUT

A Little Iroquois Boy



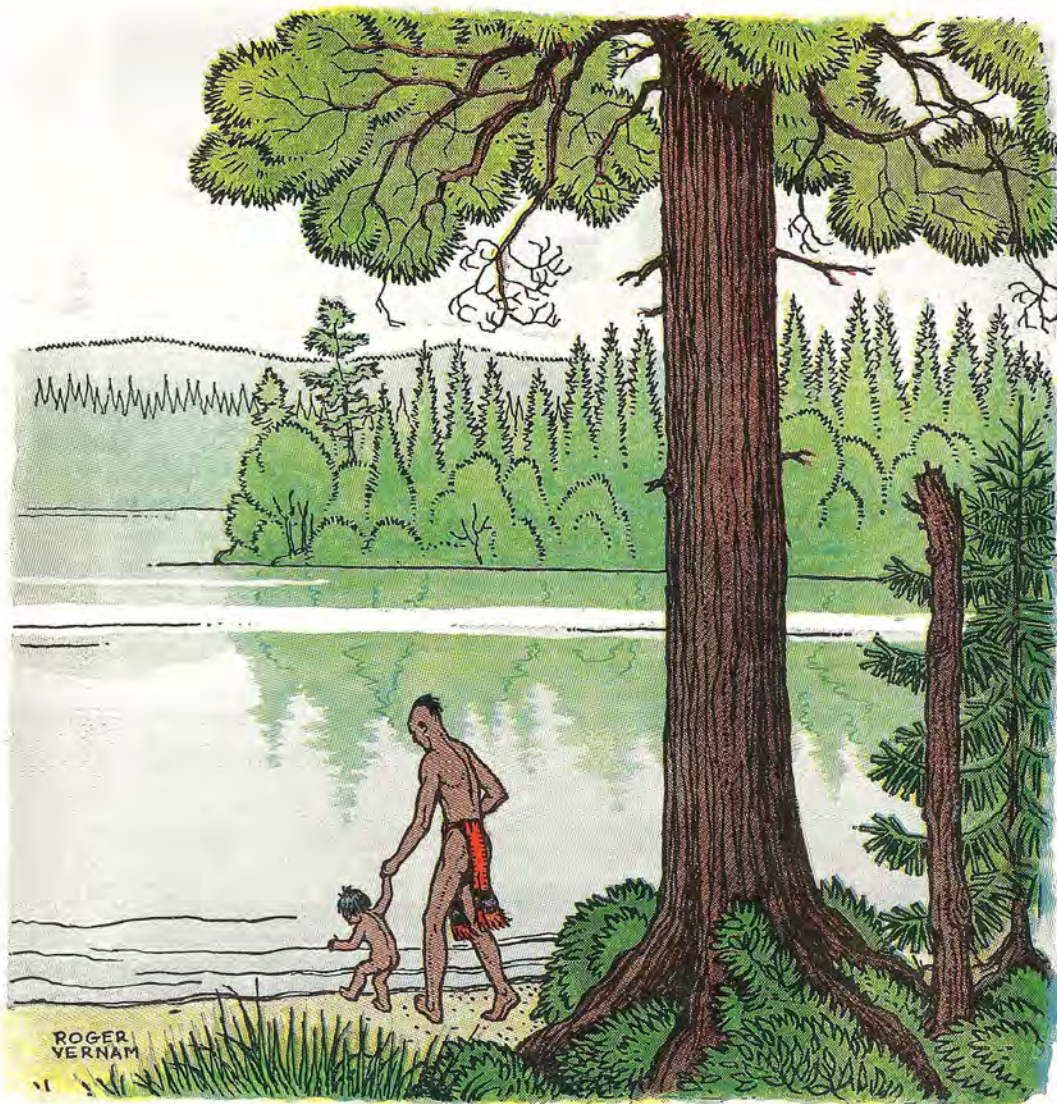


LEAPING TROUT—A LITTLE IROQUOIS BOY

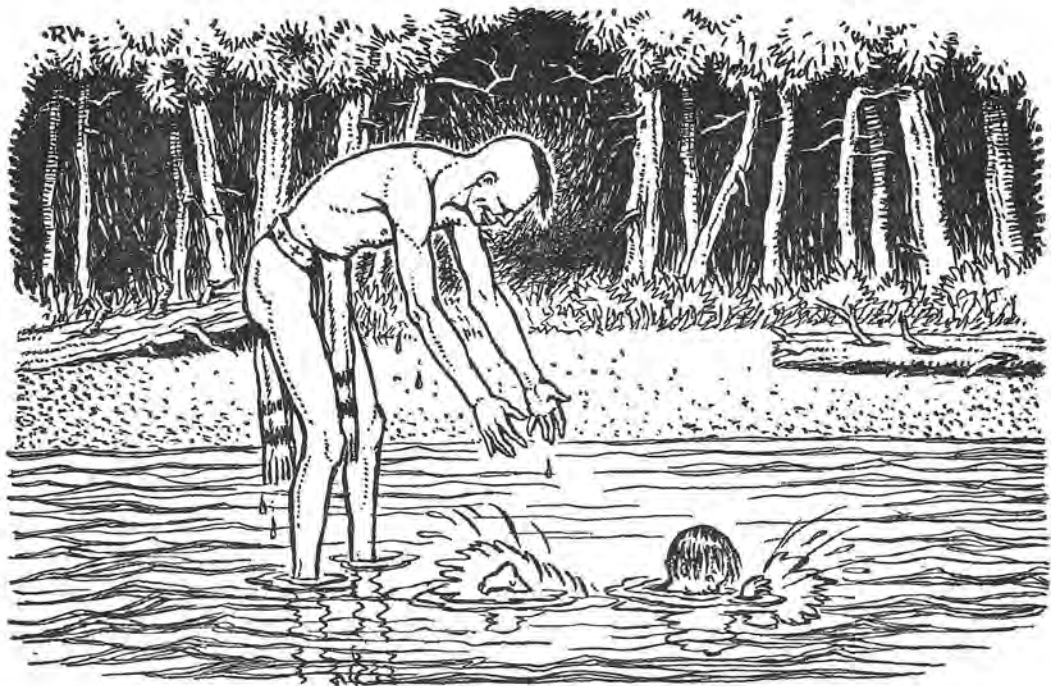
Leaping Trout was two years old before he had any name except "Baby." Almost every day his grandmother said to his mother: "Why don't you give the baby a name?" And every time his mother answered; "I can't think of any name that suits him."

When he was two years old, his father, Swift Panther, said it was time he learned to swim. The Iroquois Indians loved the water. They were great swimmers and swift paddlers in their birchbark canoes.

So, hand in hand, Baby and his father went down to the shore of the lake. Baby loved the water. He had often played around in it. But he had never before been in water deeper than his waist.



At first Swift Panther kept his hand under his son's chest. But Baby paddled with his hands and kicked out his feet, just as his father did. Soon he was swimming along alone, just like a little puppy.



After they had been swimming for quite a long time, Swift Panther said they must go back to the shore. When they reached shallow water, Swift Panther stood up. But Baby swam on, until his knees hit the sand on the bottom of the lake.

"That's as far as you can swim," said his father. "Stand up, now. We must go home."

Baby rolled over on his back and laughed.

"No! No!" he said. "I like the water. I don't want to go home."

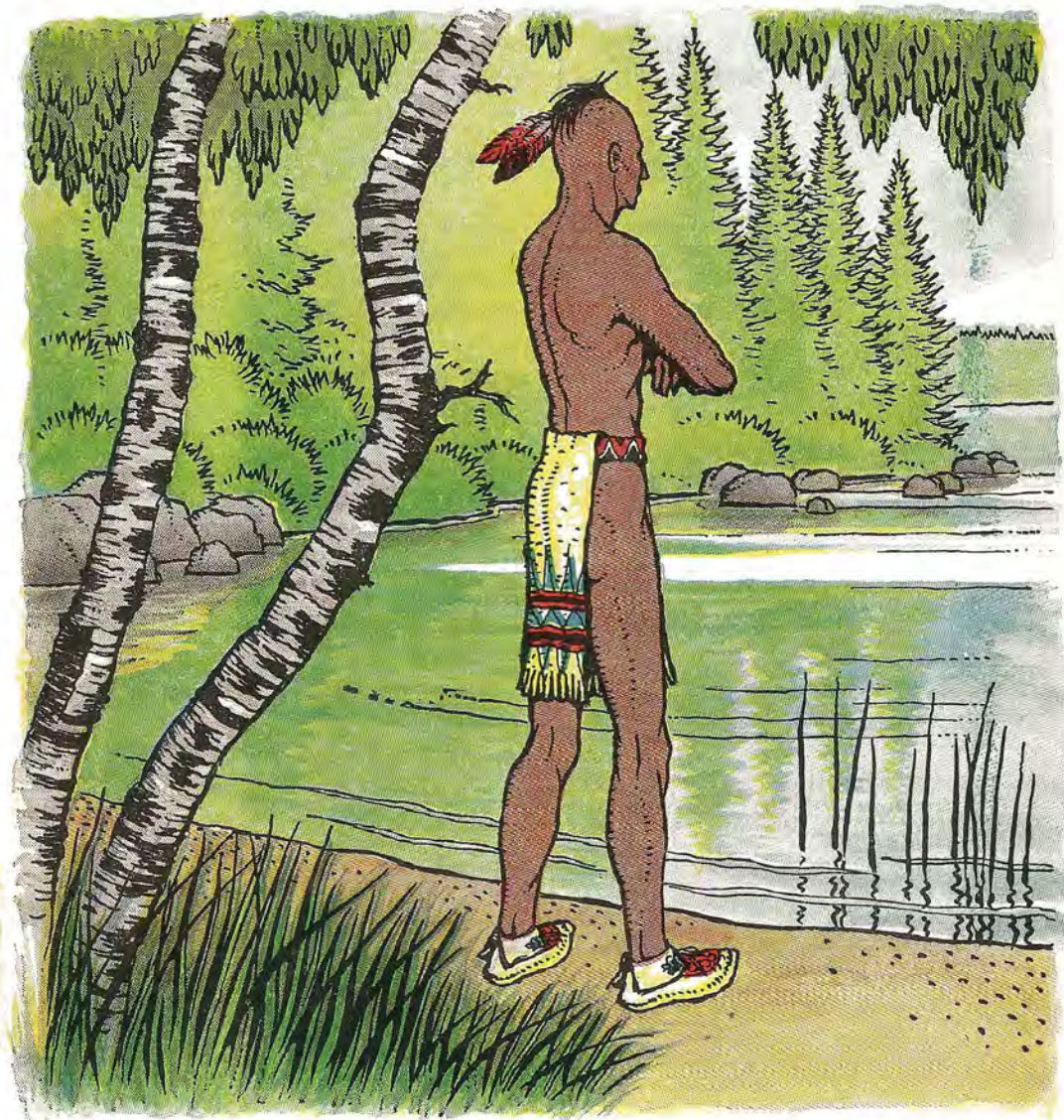
Swift Panther reached down to pick him up. But Baby squirmed around and curved his body, as a fish does in shallow water and slipped away from him. His father laughed.



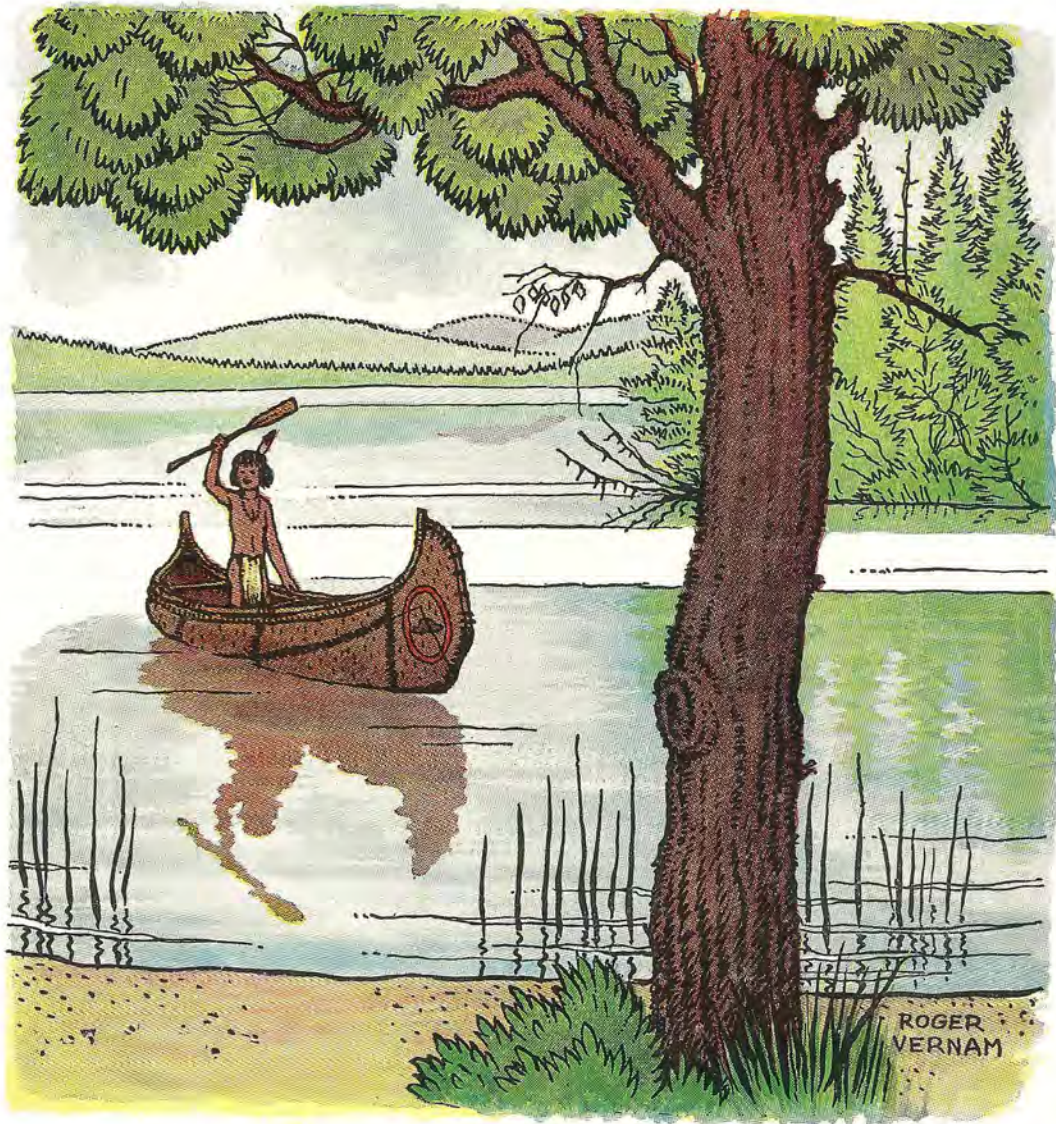
“Come little leaping trout,” he said, as he picked Baby up and set him on his shoulder. “You shall be called Leaping Trout, until you are a man and win a warrior’s name by some brave deed.”

When Leaping Trout was seven, his father let him help in the making of a birchbark canoe. First they made a frame of willow branches. Then Swift Panther picked out a large white birch tree, with perfect bark. He cut around the bark close to the ground. Then he made a second cut near to the lowest branches. After this, he cut straight down between these circles. Then he lifted one edge and pulled the bark from the tree, in one piece. This made the body of the canoe.

Leaping Trout helped his father stretch the bark over



the willow frame. They sewed up the ends with strips of willow bark. Then they spread the sap of the spruce tree, over the seams. When this dried, not a drop of water could get through.



When the canoe was finished, Swift Panther picked it up and laid it lightly on the water.

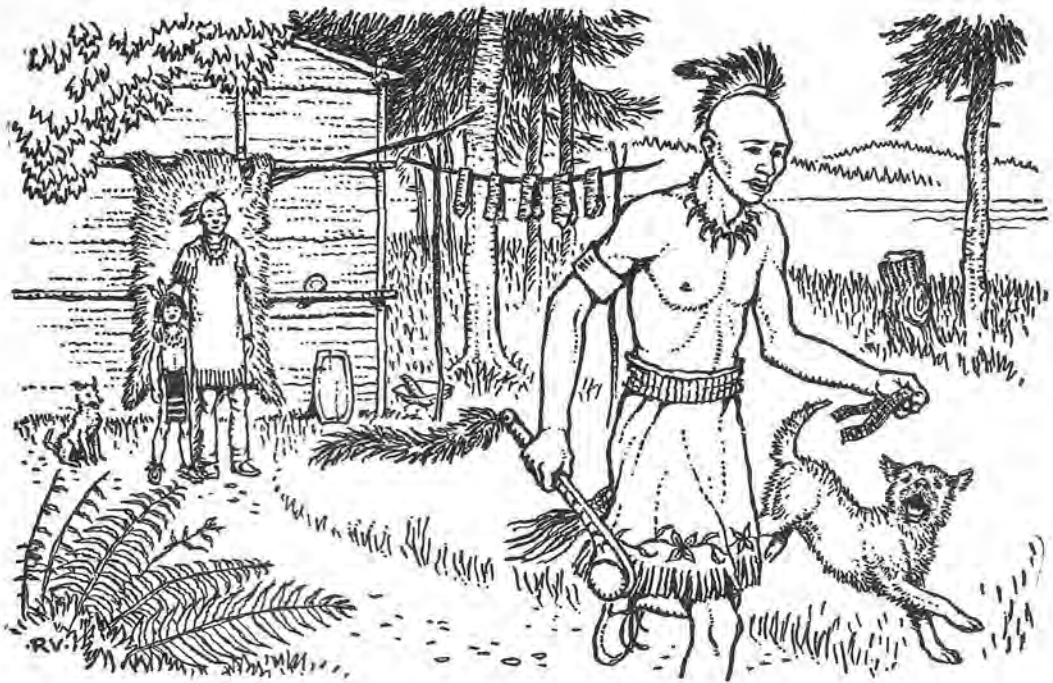
"Step into the canoe, my son," he said. "It is yours. You have often paddled with me. Now you may paddle alone.



I know that you will be safe. Even if you should overturn your canoe, you will be in no danger of drowning. One who swims like a fish is as safe as a fish, in water."

Leaping Trout could hardly believe that the beautiful canoe was really his. But at his father's words, he lifted the paddle above his head. That was his way of saying "Thank you."

Soon he was paddling out over the lake. All morning he kept on. He would have liked to stay in the canoe all day. But when the sun stood straight above his head, he knew that it was dinner time. He was hungry, so he turned the bow of the canoe toward home and paddled as fast as he could.

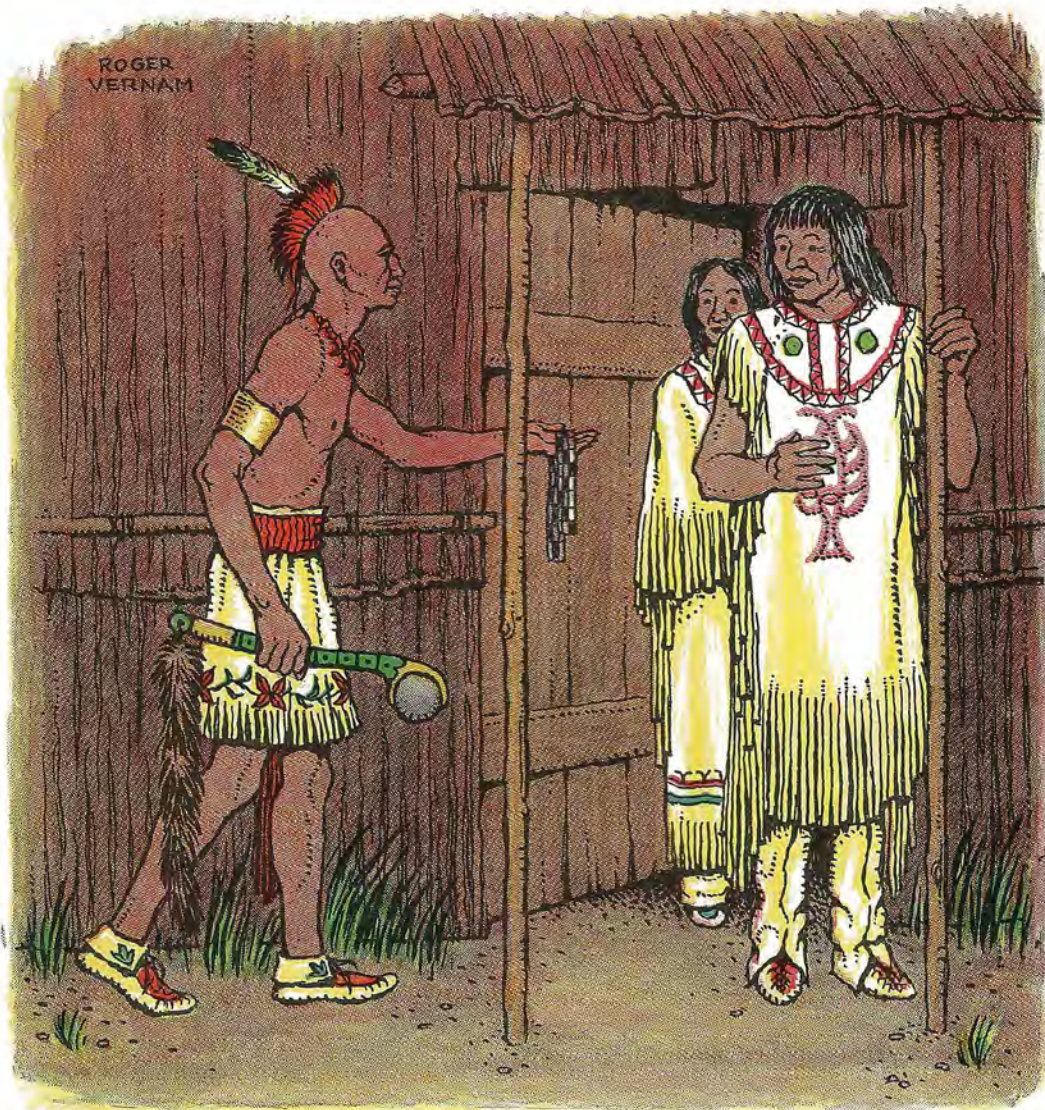


Every day through the summer and autumn, he went off in his canoe. Sometimes he took some food and stayed all day. Soon he knew the lake, almost as well as Swift Panther himself did. But, though he loved his canoe and became the swiftest paddler in the tribe, he always liked swimming better than anything else.

Swift Panther was chief of his band. Leaping Trout would some day be chief. When he was ten years old, his father decided to have a feast and ask all his friends to it. He sent a messenger through the woods to give the invitations. To prove that the messenger was really from him, he sent along his best wampum bead belt.

Wampum was made from shells. Most of it was white,

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because it was made from white snail shells, or the pearly part of clam shells. But Iroquois Indians cut purple beads from the dark part of the clam shell. This was hard to cut and polish. So it was more valuable than white.

Because Swift Panther was a chief, his belt had many rows of purple wampum. His friends knew that it was his belt. When the messenger showed it, they knew the invitation really came from their chief. Otherwise they might have thought it was a trick of some enemy, to lead them into danger.

The day of the feast, the Indians who were invited came from far and near and smoked the pipe of friendship with Swift Panther. There was a great feast. Leaping Trout and the other boys had a wonderful time, with games and races, on land and on the lake. When the fun was over everyone agreed that it was the best time they ever had.





LEAPING TROUT

Have you ever been out paddling
In a really true canoe?

See! Leaping Trout just loves it
And he helped to make it too.

His father taught him how to swim
When he was hardly grown.

So now he paddles everywhere
And does it all alone.